INTERNET-BASED FILM FESTIVAL DIGITAL ENTRY AND BACK OFFICE SERVICES SUITE MODEL

by

JOSEPH BARRY NEULIGHT

5

BACKGROUND

This patent application claims the benefit of an earlier filed U.S. provisional patent application dated August 15, 2000, serial no. 60/225,512.

This invention relates to a computer system, and more particularly,

10   to a computerized business system for the administration and processing of international film festival submissions.

Currently, databases exist for listing basic film festival information. Each festival lists on its database the location, activities, and dates and times of events, and film selection criteria. However, it is primarily

15   informational based and does not provide applicants a method or means of either submitting information and/or an entry using a computer-based, pre-programmed entry form online. This lack of an efficient database forces each filmmaker to research every festival individually via telephonic communication, fax, or mail system. Previously, the filmmaker had to

20   submit a separate request to each festival to get the respective phone numbers or addresses. Once the filmmaker submitted the request, he had to wait for each of the festivals to send him back an informational pamphlet. Upon receipt of each festival's pamphlet, the filmmaker must

read through all them separately, checking for each festival's pertinent information such as location, activities, dates and times of events, rules, regulations, and qualifying criteria. Once the filmmaker decides where he/she wants to make a submission, he/she must prepare a customized

5 package for each festival. This package contains: the festival's entry form; a press kit; a copy of the film on VHS videocassette or other acceptable format; and festival entry fees, where applicable. The filmmaker must then take the packages to the post office and mail them out individually. These packages frequently weigh more than one pound. Currently, there are

10 approximately one thousand film festivals each year. As such, a filmmaker must undergo this same procedure each time, having to complete the same information but in various formats for submission to each festival where he/she wants his film considered.

There currently lacks of a more efficient and cost-effective way for a

15 filmmaker to submit his package which typically includes a copy of the videocassette on VHS, a press kit, an entry form, and entry fees. Hence, a filmmaker needs a computerized, more efficient way to submit his applications and similar attachments to the various film festivals. There also lacks of a more efficient and cost-effective way for a film festival to

20 receive and administer these packages. For example, some of the more obvious problems are the following:

Virtually all the festivals display their informational databases in different formats. This makes it very difficult for a filmmaker to transfer his similar information between various databases.

After festival coordinators unpack and sort the many packages, the VHS preview cassettes must be sorted into groups and tabulated, and then pass from judge to judge in a linear fashion for review. Linear meaning that after each judge views and rates the videocassette, he passes it on to the

5 next judge. Currently, no two judges can simultaneously watch and rate these videocassettes from different locations. Each judge must wait for the previous judge to complete his/her evaluation before the latter judge may view the videocassette. As such, the review process for these videocassettes is time-consuming.

10 After all the judges have evaluated the videocassettes, festival coordinators manually collect the results and sort them according to their respective ratings. Judges repeat this whole process of re-rating and re-sorting each videocassette until they choose the finalists. The festival coordinators then notify the accepted and rejected filmmakers via mail or

15 telephone or fax.

The process is very lengthy and time-consuming because the procedure to submit and evaluate videocassettes and thereafter, to notify the filmmakers, is done manually though using pencil and paper and various courier services.

20 During the time from whence a filmmaker submits his/her package and the festival reviews his/her application, communication between the two parties consists of using some combination of telecommunications, facsimile, and e-mail. Since communications occur through some combination of the various means, neither the filmmaker nor the festival

coordinators can maintain continuity in their respective records. Consequently, if a need arises to reference a past communication, the likelihood of locating or recalling it may be difficult.

Another problem with this obsolete method is programming screening times and venues for all accepted films. Currently, festival coordinators manually record the screening times and venues for all accepted films on a spreadsheet or bulletin board. As such, they have to manually assign an appropriate time slot within a show and within a venue to accommodate each film's running time and exhibition formats, and manually re-calculate the cumulative running time of each show. This process is very time consuming because it may take many hours to perform all the calculations using pencil and paper.

At the final stage of processing the submissions, where festival catalog designers and the press at large want access to the filmmakers' press kits and video clips, festival catalog designers must scan in such information and members of the press must receive duplicate copies. This is the only method currently available to distribute press kits, video clips, and glossy photos to the press and catalog designers. As a result of using this antiquated method for distribution, festival coordinators must make several trips to the post office, sending out weighty videotapes and press kits to the media.

After a festival event is over, festival coordinators must manually complete international customs labels, express mailing tags, and insurance forms, all of which is very time-consuming and obsolete, in order to return

film prints and master screening videos to participating filmmakers.

DRAWINGS

These and other features, aspects, and advantages of the present

5   invention will be better understood from the following drawings, description

and appended claims, where:

FIG 1 is a diagrammatic illustration of a computerized submission and

processing system according to the embodiment of the present invention.

10   **FIG 2** is a diagram illustrating an example of processing submissions

from the operational perspective of the filmmaker, performed by a

computer and a user running the software program shown in FIG 1.

FIG 3 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps

15   performed by a computer and a filmmaker user performing a film project

setup according to the embodiment of the invention shown in FIG 2.

FIG 4 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps

performed by a computer and a filmmaker user performing browse and

20   application function according to the embodiment of the invention shown in

FIG 2.

FIG 5 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a filmmaker user performing status check function according to the embodiment of the invention shown in FIG 2.

5   FIG 6 is a diagram illustrating an example of processing submissions from the operational perspective of the film festival, performed by a computer and a festival user running the software program shown in FIG 1.

FIG 7 is a diagram illustrating an example of processing selections
10   from the operational perspective of the film festival, performed by a computer and a festival user according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 6.

FIG 8 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps
15   performed by a computer and a festival user performing asset management and filing tasks according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 7.

FIG 9 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps
20   performed by a computer and a festival user performing human resource management tasks according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 7.

FIG **10** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a festival user performing searches, sortings, taggings, storages and other operations on assets according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 7.

5

FIG **11** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a festival user performing viewing and assessment of assets according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 7.

10

FIG **12** is an illustration showing an example of a user interface of a computer according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 8.

FIG **13** is an illustration showing an example of a user interface of a computer according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 3.

15

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The following discussion describes in detail one embodiment of the invention and several variations of that embodiment. This discussion should not be construed, however, as limiting the invention to those particular

5   embodiments. Practitioners skilled in the art will recognize numerous other embodiments as well. For a definition of the complete scope of the invention, the reader is directed to the appended claims.

The present invention is a computer-based method of administering submissions by applicants for over a thousand international festivals. The

10   computer processing of information from the data entries is significantly more efficient and convenient than the current and traditional method of administering filmmakers' entry forms, press kits, video preview copies, and entry fees using mail couriers and manual office systems. The application processing and administering system of the present invention comprises data

15   entry and processing means for filmmakers and film festivals, including means for creating customized entry forms that will be acceptable in all a thousand or more festivals. A service bureau's data processing and digitizing of entry forms, press kits, videos, and fees will provide the festivals with the filmmaker's entire package online. The burden of

20   filmmakers' composing their press kit copy, videocassette copy, entry form, and bank draft to send to each and every festival after researching all the information for each festival to check for qualifications is thus alleviated. On the other hand, the festivals will also have access to each filmmaker's package online thus alleviating the burden of searching every package

individually by unpackaging each package, shifting through for relevant information within the package and then passing the information through to different people for review and processing.

FIG 1 is a diagrammatic illustration of a computerized submission and processing system according to the embodiment of the present invention. One advantage of the invention is that s each film festival need not have its own server to host filmmaker submissions. The submissions can be hosted on a server **107** operated by a service bureau on a subscription basis to the festival. Thus, multiple festivals **109** may have access to the same film assets hosted by the same service bureau. In the preferred embodiment, the film asset is called a "project." A project consists of entry form data, a press kit, and a video preview.

FIG 2 is a diagram illustrating an example of processing submissions from the operational perspective of the filmmaker, performed by a computer and a user running the software program shown in FIG 1. In the preferred embodiment, each filmmaker interested in submitting his/her project to a festival may use the service bureau's submissions software **221** to setup a project **223** in the service bureau's database. Once established in the database, a filmmaker may use the service bureau's comprehensive database of over 1000 international film festivals to browse and apply **225** to any listed film festival via the Internet. Subsequent to making a submission, a filmmaker may view the current or historical selection status **227** of any given submission to a film festival. A filmmaker may also send and receive "contextual messages" **205** pertaining to a given submission,

which may be displayed and administered from the view status **227** page.

FIG **3** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps

performed by a computer and a filmmaker user performing a film project

setup or performing an update to an extant project according to the

5   embodiment of the invention shown in FIG **2**. The system presents the

option **305** to update an extant project or to setup a new project. The

project data are updated or entered anew by way of a form **311**, which

receives the data common to the entry forms of all 1000 international film

festivals. The advantage of filing a single, comprehensive online form is

10   that the filmmaker may enter project data once, rather than separately for

each festival for which he/she wishes to make a submission. The form FIG

13, in the preferred embodiment, includes over 100 questions regarding a

project, such as multiple synopses, year and place of production, production

contacts, distribution status and screening history, preview and exhibition

15   formats, original and foreign language versions, press kit information, genre

and niche categorizations, student verification, etc. Each filmmaker is also

able to submit a single video and a single press kit to the service bureau,

where the service bureau digitizes both the film and press kit on its server,

thus eliminating the filmmaker's need to submit the package to each festival

20   separately.

The project setup scenario, in the preferred embodiment, includes

software checks for completeness of information **221** and tracking of

skipped forms **225** to ensure that filmmakers setup a project with the

minimal information that is required to fulfill a typical film festival entry,

since some information is required by every film festival but not all

information is required by every film festival. To this end, a filmmaker is

required to view and fill each form in a preferential order maintained by the

system during the initial setup of a project, called "linear navigation" in the

5   preferred embodiment. However, when opting to update an extant project

207 the filmmaker is routed by the computer system to a "non-linear

navigation" paradigm, whereupon forms may be updated in any order

selected by the filmmaker. The computer assigns a serialized project

identifier **229** to all new projects entered into the database, which is used

10   to track, recall, and assign access permissions throughout the festival

submission system shown in **FIG 1**. The project identifier is also tied to a

filmmaker user identification for automated retrieval during the filmmaker

login process **201** shown in **FIG 2**, which login is pre-requisite to any use of

the festival submission system. The advantage of this method is that a

15   filmmaker may access the system once at the beginning of a session and

then switch freely among his/her hosted projects within the system.

A second required component of the festival submission system shown

in **FIG 1** is a festival information component, which is entered and stored in

a database of comprehensive festival listings for each of over 1000

20   international film festivals. In the preferred embodiment, a festival listing

includes such comprehensive data as contact information, rules and

regulations, terms of entry, and categories of entry. Each category of entry

is further stipulated by such comprehensive guidelines as preview and

exhibition formats, deadlines and fees, year and place of production, press

kit requirements, original and foreign language screening requirements, premiere requirements, etc.

Festival organizers may setup a festival or update an extant festival by way of a form, as similarly elaborated in **FIG 3**. The computer assigns a serialized project identifier to all new festivals entered into the database, which is used to track, recall, and assign access permissions throughout the festival submission system shown in **FIG 1**. The festival setup process includes checks for completeness of information and tracking of skipped forms, to ensure that the minimal data is available to the system in order to fulfill a fully automated submission to the festival. A festival may require certain information of applicants that is not represented on the form common to over 1000 international film festivals. In this scenario, a service bureau system administrator may design a form, called a "special form" in the preferred embodiment, which is attributed to a festival identifier and becomes a permanent addendum to a festival's online entry form.

FIG 4 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a filmmaker user performing browse and application function according to the embodiment of the invention shown in **FIG 2**. The filmmaker may select to browse and apply regarding any one particular project that is hosted within the system or, in the case of browse only, the filmmaker may browse the festival database more generally, with regards to no particular project. Upon entry to the browse and apply function, the system automatically assumes a default project, which is set by the filmmaker in a preferences component **207** shown in **FIG 2**.

In the first sub-component of browse and apply, the system uses the default project, or any other project selected by the filmmaker, to suggest from the database those festivals most appropriate to the given project, which suggestions are displayed on the computer screen **403** and called "recommendations" in the preferred embodiment. The system generates such recommendations by comparing and most nearly matching key information in the filmmaker project database to concomitant information in the festival listing database -- although in the preferred embodiment these databases are considered to be a single database, sharing data classes and data tables. This key information includes such basic matches as genre and niche, entry deadline, film length, etc. The advantage of this method of recommendations is that a filmmaker would not otherwise find, through the time-consuming process of manual searching, those festivals among the more than 1000 international film festivals for which his/her project is most qualified.

In a second sub-component of browse and apply, the filmmaker also has the option **405** to manually search **413** and select **415** from a list of festivals in the service bureau's database just by a text entry **409** using the keyboard on his/her personal computer. This type of deep search allows a filmmaker to refine a set of results by filtering a comprehensive set of festival criteria, including such information as genre and niche, entry deadline, event dates, film lengths, prizes and awards, native languages and foreign versions accepted, competitiveness, fees, premiere and distribution requirements, preview and exhibition formats, etc., including all of the non-

private data entered by over 1000 festival organizers in the aggregate. The advantage of this type of deep search allows a filmmaker to pinpoint those festivals to which he/she is interested in applying, and simultaneously eliminate all others, without having to manually review over 1000

5   international film festival publications of rules, regulations, and entry forms -- whether they be available in print or electronic form.

No matter if a search result is achieved by way of automated recommendations, keyword entry, or a deep search and filter process, the system displays all matching query results in a list format. The filmmaker

10   may select a particular festival **415** from a result list by a point-and-click method of using the mouse on his/her personal computer, causing the system to display a detailed festival listing for an individual festival **417**. The listing includes all such non-private information as has been entered by the festival organizer, including a hyperlink to the festival's home page **423**

15   on the Internet. Each category of entry is also displayed as a hyperlink, which may be expanded on a subsequent page to list the individual and specific criteria for entry to a given category of a given festival. The advantage of this method of sub-dividing festival listings into entry categories is that a filmmaker is able to select the appropriate category for

20   his/her project, since it is rarely enough to more generally enter most festivals.

In the third sub-component of browse and apply, a filmmaker may choose to save a festival listing or multiple festival listings for review at a later date. The system creates hyperlinks directly to these saved festival

listings, which are made available to the filmmaker in what is called a "watch list" in the preferred embodiment. The advantage of a watch list is that a filmmaker can eliminate the need for repeated searching, even though he/she may not be ready to act on a festival entry in a given user

5   session. The "watch list" is further integrated to the system in that a filmmaker can request that a reminder e-mail notice be automatically sent out to him/her by the system in a specified time advance of the festival's submission deadline.

In the fourth sub-component of browse and apply, an image button on

10   the computer screen allows a filmmaker to request that the system check the qualification **425** of his/her project against the detailed regulations governing a particular category within a festival. The system performs this **427/428** by a similar matching method to that used for generating recommendations, except with the addition of qualification criteria, such as

15   date of completion, preview and exhibition formats, press kit requirements, county of origin, premiere and distribution status, etc. This automated qualification function prevents filmmakers from submitting projects that are unqualified without having to comb through the fine print of festival rules and regulations, and it prevents film festivals from receiving projects that

20   are unsolicited, as may otherwise often occur. If a given project is deemed by the system to be unqualified for a given festival, a warning is displayed **429** to the filmmaker, offering the option **423** to cancel the application process or to override and continue.

In the fifth sub-component of browse and apply, one of several

submission service options will be offered to the filmmaker, according to the preferred embodiment, and depending on the type of service agreement in place between the service bureau and a given festival.

At "Level 1", only the festival information will be displayed but the filmmaker will not be able to proceed beyond this point. Even at this initial stage, the means of a digitized computer database allows the filmmaker to avoid shuffling through various entry forms retrieved by placing phone calls to the festivals and reading through the numerous pamphlets to check for deadlines, month of event, awards, and screening categories among other things.

At "Level 2", the service bureau's software will access the database and generate a completed entry form using an exact facsimile of the festival's current printed or electronic form. If "special forms" are required by a given festival, the filmmaker will be prompted to submit additional information **443** using the same interface and form-fill process described in **FIG 3.** Subsequently, the completed entry form will either be e-mailed or faxed to the requesting filmmaker as, for example, a PDF formatted document. When the requesting filmmaker prints the information, the form can be submitted to the festival via standard parcel post, along with the press kit, video preview copy, and entry fee. Although standard procedure for submission of entrance package is required, all the above-mentioned prerequisites are still eliminated. Additionally, the filmmaker no longer has to call into the film festival for entry packet because the filmmaker will be able to download the application form from the service bureau's database.

At "Level 3", no paper forms are generated, rather the service bureau software collects the festival entry fees and any service bureau processing fees, where applicable, using an e-commerce shopping cart paradigm **453** and makes the filmmaker's application available to the partner festival online as part of the Festival Back Office Suite. In essence, the filmmaker's application is submitted to the requested festival **457** on the filmmaker's behalf. Subsequent to the submission of filmmaker's application, the service bureau sends the filmmaker a confirmation via e-mail **465** along with instructions **463** and tracking numbers **455** for submission of the press kit and video preview copy to be sent directly to the festival via standard courier. At Level 3, only the application and fees are sent directly to the festival on behalf of the filmmaker. The filmmaker will then send in the press kit and the video preview copy to the festival with the tracking numbers so that the festival can place the two together upon receipt of them. In addition to eliminating the problems as stated above, the filmmaker is no longer obligated to send in a separate application and a bank draft or credit card number to the multiple festivals where the filmmaker chooses to submit his/her package.

At "Level 4", in addition to all the services provided for in Level 3, the filmmaker can send the service bureau the press kit to be digitized and stored in the service bureau's computerized database. Upon receipt, the service bureau digitizes the press kit and stores it in the service bureau's server. Other than eliminating all the steps for the filmmaker as stated in Level 3, the filmmaker is no longer required to send in a copy of his/her

press kit to the multiple festivals of his/her choosing. Along with the

tracking number, the filmmaker will only have to send in the copy of the

video preview.

At "Level 5", the service bureau will provide the filmmaker with full

5   service, which includes all the services provided for in Level 4 in addition to

providing filmmaker with the option to send to the service bureau his/her

video preview copy to be digitized and stored in the service bureau's

database. This option eliminates all paperwork or any need to send

anything to the multiple festivals. The means of this computerized

10   database and storage system will permit the filmmaker to submit one entry

form, one press kit, and one copy of his/her video preview that can

subsequently be viewed by multiple festivals online without having to re-

send them. When the service bureau receives the filmmaker's complete

package, the service bureau digitizes the press kit along with the video.

15   The digitized press kit and copy of the video are stored on the service

bureau's servers and on outsourced servers. This enables any festival, its

judges, or its authorized representatives to retrieve the videos and press

kits from the service bureau's servers and view the information directly,

thus eliminating the hassle of opening envelopes and individually sorting out

20   all information by hand. The means of a digitized computerized submission

system makes the entry process much more efficient and less time

consuming for both filmmakers and film festivals. Since complete

submissions packages are made available to festivals virtually

instantaneously, filmmakers may be certain that they have met required

deadlines, without considerations of postmark and delivery dates, or the undependability of standard mail couriers.

FIG 5 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a filmmaker user performing status check

5   function according to the embodiment of the invention shown in FIG 2. The system retrieves the statuses 501 for all prior and current submissions to festivals across all prior and current projects associated with a filmmaker's user identification. The system presents active and historical status in an expandable list view, using festival names as headers. The most general

10 status indicators would include, for example, pending, accepted, or rejected.

A sub-component of view status is multi-directional electronic correspondence. Correspondence may be between a given film festival and a filmmaker, or between the service bureau and a filmmaker. Messages are

15 organized and systematically contextualized so as to appear within the expanding views of the festivals to which they directly pertain. This eliminates the hassle for all involved parties of trying to maintain a record of all correspondence through note pads, fax sheets, and regular courier mail. Either the filmmaker or the festival can trail all correspondence

20 between them at any time for easy reference. In the preferred embodiment, this function is performed by software that refers to a system-wide messaging database, wherein correspondences are assigned message types and are tagged with one or more of user IDs, film project IDs, film festival IDs, and service bureau departmental IDs. As opposed to a general

"catch-all" mailbox paradigm, messages are always retrieved and displayed within their functional context, throughout the system's integrated components. Examples of message types include acceptance notifications, rejection notifications, hospitality notifications, print shipment

5   notifications, error notifications, tech support notifications, casual correspondence, etc.

One embodiment of contextual messaging is shown in **FIG 5**, where an awaiting notification message may be selected **505** and viewed **509** by a filmmaker. In the case of a project having been accepted to a festival, the

10   system retrieves a festival's customized acceptance forms **513** which may then be filled and filed electronically **515**. Formerly, this exchange would have been executed via fax or standard mail courier.

FIG 6 is a diagram illustrating an example of processing submissions from the operational perspective of the film festival, performed by a

15   computer and a festival user running the software program shown in **FIG 1**. In the preferred embodiment, over 1000 international festivals film festival may utilize the system to perform and customize common "back office" functions, depending on the type of service agreement in place with the service bureau , including multi-directional correspondence **605** as

20   described above. Additionally, festivals will be able to access the service bureau's online database and online software suite via the Internet using an ASP (Application Service Provider) model to expedite the receipt, sorting, and tracking of project entries **625**, the selection and judging of project entries **627**, the scheduling of screenings for accepted project entries **629**,

and the posting of previews for scheduled screenings **631** to the press. The system is fluid and integrated, with a redundant user interface **FIG 12** that traffics digitized filmmaker submissions, or "assets," through the various processes of a film festival. In addition to this class of "asset management

5 tools," exemplified in **FIG 8**, the system also features a class of "resource management tools," exemplified in **FIG 9**, which may be used to assign and manage specialized staff throughout these festival processes, such as judges, workers and volunteers, and outside media and reporters.

FIG 7 is a diagram illustrating an example of processing selections

10 from the operational perspective of the film festival, performed by a computer and a festival user according to the embodiment of the invention shown in **Fig 6.** A festival administrator may use the selections software tools **703** to sort entries into "crates & cartons" **705** for judging and to assign "juries and judges" **707.**

15 **FIG 8** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a festival user performing asset management and filing tasks according to the embodiment of the invention shown in **Fig 7.** This illustration of "crates & cartons" is specific to the process and administration of festival selections **703**, but the same process may be

20 generalized to the other processes in the preferred embodiment such as scheduling **629** and press outreach **631**, since these other processes are iterations of a similar conceit. Presented in total, this present class of "asset management tools" is a customizable, object-oriented filing system that fulfills the common organizational requirements of film festivals

through the customary phases of film festival administration. The system

therefore employs the industry jargon common to film festivals in the

naming of its component objects. For example, as filmmaker projects are

trafficked through the three phases here enumerated in the preferred

5   embodiment, the objects assume different names, such that a project is

called an "entry" during selections, a "screening" during scheduling, and a

"preview" during press outreach, and where an entry is defined as a

filmmaker project pending decision by a festival selection committee, a

screening is defined as a project that has been accepted to a festival, and a

10   preview is defined as a project that may have been edited for review by the

press.

One component that is required in the present system is a group

information object, called "crates" in the preferred embodiment. A

subgroup object is also required to effectively sort and manage the high

15   volume of submission assets, called "cartons" in the preferred embodiment.

A crate is a collection of one or more cartons **1203**; a carton is a collection

of one or more entries **1205**. An entry may be assigned to a carton **1209**,

but not directly to a crate. In their default states, entries are collapsed

into cartons and cartons are collapsed into crates, such that only the top-

20   level of crate is visible in a displayed list of crates **829**. This hierarchical,

electronic filing system for filmmaker entry forms, press kits, and video

media has clear advantages over traditional methods such as bookshelves

and file drawers and piles.

FIG 8 shows the process by which a festival administrator creates and edits attributes for crate and carton objects 811 by way of a form. The attributes assignable in these forms have the ability to be "informational labels" for a given object, or in many cases "rules and limiters," which govern an object's behavior as an organizational tool. Examples of informational crate attributes may include name and description. Since crates may commonly be named for a festival's categories of entry, there is the option to assign a category limiter to a crate, such that the crate may only store entries submitted in a specified category. If the user attempts to break the limiter, a warning is presented, with the option to override the rule and continue. Examples of informational carton attributes may include name and description. Also, a carton can only exist if it is assigned to a crate. Additionally, the user may set limiters such as the total hours and minutes of entries that may be stored in a carton; the number of judges that must be assigned to a carton; the languages, nationalities, genres, and running times of projects placed in a carton. All crates and cartons are assigned a festival ID and stored 613 in the service bureau's database. In keeping with the ASP model, little or no software and data resides on the desktop computer of the user.

FIG 9 is a flowchart illustrating an example of a sequence of steps performed by a computer and a festival user performing resource management tasks according to the embodiment of the invention shown in Fig 7. This illustration of "juries and judges" is specific to the process and administration of festival selections 703, but the same process may be

generalized to the other processes in the preferred embodiment such as scheduling **629** and press outreach **631**, since these other processes are iterations of a similar conceit. Presented in total, the present class of "resource management tools" is a customizable, object-oriented human

5   resource allocator that fulfills the common organizational requirements of film festivals. The system therefore employs the industry jargon common to film festivals in the naming of its component objects.

One component that is required in the present system is a group information object, called "juries" in the preferred embodiment. A

10   subgroup object is also required to represent individual persons, called "judges" in the preferred embodiment. A jury is a collection of one or more judges; a judge is defined by a profile. In their default states, profiles are collapsed into judges and judges are collapsed into juries, such that only the top-level of jury is visible in a displayed list of juries **927**.

15   **FIG 8** shows the process by which a festival administrator creates and edits attributes for jury and judge objects **911** by way of a form. As with crates and cartons, attributes assignable in these forms have the ability to be "informational labels" for a given object, or, in many cases, "rules and limiters," which govern an object's behavior as an organizational tool.

20   Examples of informational jury attributes are name and description. Also, since juries may commonly be set to a standard number of judges, there is the option to assign limiter to a jury, such that the jury may only be comprised of x judges. Examples of informational judge attributes are name, address, telephone contact, e-mail address, and system user ID. A

judge may be assigned directly to a carton or a crate, or may be assigned as part of a jury to a carton or a crate.

Filmmaker entries are searched, sorted, moved into cartons, and "batch processed" using a comprehensive database search tool, shown in **FIG 10**. With this tool, festival representatives are able to find a single entry **1005**, recall *en masse* entries matching several certain pre-determined criteria **1007**, or search for entries using over 100 combinations of criteria filters **1009**, drawing on data collected in the filmmaker entry form and stored in the service bureau database. In the preferred embodiment, these filters include but are not limited to, preview and exhibition formats, premiere and screening histories, year of production, country of origin, and production budget. The certain pre-determined recall criteria may include projects that are accepted, rejected, waiting to be judged, orphaned in the system, or marked for notification. Results of any search **1011**, regardless of method, are displayed in a result page **1013**, which may be further refined **1019** by adding to or subtracting from any of the initial search criteria. This alleviates the hassle of shuffling through paper entry forms and looking for matches to a given query, which may often include multiple, mutually exclusive criteria, which is more efficiently executed by a computer.

This search tool is fully integrated into the present invention in that results can be stored in bins **1025**, and set aside there in preparation for one of many "batch processes" **1039** having to do with the customary administration of a film festival, such as notifying filmmakers of their

acceptance or rejection **1061**. The contents of bins can also be moved into cartons **1051** for processing by juries and judges.

Crates and cartons, in addition to their function as filing tools and human resource schedulers, offer the advantage of auto-calculation.

5 Whenever crates and cartons are viewed on screen, the system tabulates the total number of entries and the cumulative running time of entries contained within **1211**, as well as the total number and the cumulative running time of those entries which have been fully judged and of those entries still in deliberation. Each judge object within a carton also displays

10 a similar automatic tabulation reflecting the number of entries, the total running time, and the total workload completed and pending **1207**.

Within a carton, a festival administrator may select any judge **841** by a point-and-click method of using the mouse on his/her personal computer. The system displays a list of the judge's entire workload **843**. Within a

15 carton or a judge, a festival administrator may select any entry **845** by a point-and-click method of using the mouse on his/her personal computer. The system displays the components of an entry **FIG 11**, such as entry form **1105**, judging forms **1121**, judging status, press kit **1103**, video media **1145**, and correspondence file **1113**. A festival judge may also access

20 entries for the purposes of recording judgments **1125**. Using the web interface, entries can be routed to multiple judges **1207** whereupon they are able to view a copy of the filmmaker's project online, simultaneously, thus avoiding the hassle of waiting for other judges to finish before starting their reviewing process. Additionally, as a means of processing information

for individual entries, festival judges can input comment and ratings for

each film that can subsequently be tracked and tabulated. The festival can

then generate selection reports for entries based upon satisfaction of

criteria. When a final decision has been reached, notification of acceptance

5   or rejection may be processed as a batch by the system, and would appear

instantly in the filmmakers' status pages as shown in **FIG 5**. Other fully

automated reporting includes, but is not limited to, breakdown of entries

according to different screening formats, number of countries represented

in the competition, number of films submitted by men, women, or

10   minorities, number of films that are premiers in a given territory, and

average age of filmmaker. All of this reporting is performed without

traditional manual tabulation or data input of any kind on the part of the

festival administrator, since filmmakers have already entered all pertinent

data into the service bureau's database. This same demographic

15   information may be reported in the aggregate to generate international

statistics on international film festival submissions, which have never been

effectively collected due to the decentralized, analog process of entering

festivals.

The preferred embodiment of the invention uses the same

20   hierarchical structures established within the selections process **703** --

"crates and cartons" and "judges and juries" -- to facilitate scheduling **629** of

"theaters and shows" and "staffs and workers." Though these various objects

are presented to the user within a similar relational interface and may be

likewise manipulated as shown in **FIG 8**, the attributes that govern their

functionality and behavior are vastly different from a system "back-end" point of view.

Theaters are object representations of actual screening venues that will be used during a film festival. Shows are object representations of actual screening events that will be presented to an audience during a film festival, and are necessarily assigned to a theater. A screening may be assigned to a show but not to a theater. A festival programmer may create these objects of theaters and shows and assign custom attributes to them by way of a form. Informational attributes of theaters may include name, description, theater capacity, and venue address information. Theaters may also be created with certain limiters to describe the projection facility, such as exhibition formats for both picture and sound, since not all theaters are able to facilitate all media and all formats. Informational attributes for shows may include name and description. Shows also have the option of limiters for nationality, original language, and genre to assist programmers in grouping like screenings. This hierarchical, object-oriented, electronic scheduling system for festival screenings has clear advantages over traditional methods such as the use of index cards on corkboard, or the use of paper and pencil. It also alleviates the current problem of having to tabulate each film by shuffling through all the entry forms on hard copy and calculating the dates, times, venue of films, and the cumulative length of programs.

For example, in scheduling shows it is necessary for a festival programmer to repeatedly re-calculate the cumulative running times of

each event. In the present invention, these cumulative run times are tabulated "on the fly" as screenings are moved into a show. Additionally, programmers may specify as part of a show's attributes: the start time of a show; the total targeted run time; any likely delay of the start time; the

5   number and length of intermissions; and the minutes of "turnaround" time between each film. The system considers these custom attributes in making all tabulations, the product of which may be viewed and printed in calendar form or gantt chart.

As with all other parts of the festival submission system, contextual

10   messaging is integrated into the scheduling sub-component, such that a festival programmer may notify all participating filmmakers via a batch process of their project's exact screening dates, times, and locations. These notifications constitute yet another message type in the messaging database and would arrive instantly on the filmmaker status page **FIG 5** under the

15   given festival **503**. Via traditional international mail courier this same notification process often takes as much as ten days and is considered to be a less certain method of communication. This means of data processing the information and using a computerized means of communicating the information from the service bureau's preprogrammed database will also

20   alleviate the need for festivals to manually fill out international customs labels, express mailing tags, shipping manifests and insurance forms for return trafficking of film prints and master screening copies to filmmakers.

As the human resources of judges and juries may be assigned to crates and cartons, so may staffs and workers be assigned to theaters and

shows, and in all other ways manipulated similar to the preferred

embodiment shown in **FIG 9**. A staff is a collection of workers; a worker is

defined by a profile. Examples of informational worker attributes are

name, address, and telephone contacts, e-mail address, and system user ID.

5   A worker may be assigned directly to a theater or a show, or may be

assigned as part of a staff to a theater or a show. This object-oriented

means of staffing events is an improvement over traditional text lists and

paper calendar.

The preferred embodiment of the invention uses the same

10   hierarchical structures established as with "crates and cartons" and "judges

and juries" and as with "theaters and shows" and "staffs and workers" to

facilitate press outreach **631**, using "pressboxes and programs" and "media

and reporters." In accordance with the preferred embodiment, these

components may be manipulated similar to those shown in **FIG 8** and **FIG 9**,

15   although, once again, the discreet functionality is best described by the

attributes that govern the behavior of these objects, rather than by the user

interface.

A pressbox is a collection of programs, made accessible to selected

international reporters via a password, which is created and administered by

20   a festival press liaison. Informational attributes of a pressbox may include

name, description, and hyperlinks to a festival's publicity material on its

home Internet site. A program is a curated series of previews for the press,

including filmmaker press kits and video media, which may, in the preferred

embodiment, be edited or modified for this use. A preview may be assigned

to a program, but not directly to a press box. The informational attributes of a program may include name and description. The limiting attributes of a program may include total presentation time, original language, nationality, and genre of preview.

5   A medium is a collection of reporters; reporters are defined by a profile. Examples of media are print, broadcast, cable, and internet. A medium is attributed with a name and a description. A reporter is attributed with contact information such as a worker, including a professional affiliation such as a network or a publication, and a service bureau user ID.

10   This new means of reporters being able to log on to the Internet and view press materials and film previews for a particular festival via the service bureau's central server is an improvement over the traditional and costly means of dubbing festival previews and copying press kits for mailing to news outlets.

15   More generally, using the present invention, film festival offices are no longer tied to a geographical location. These offices will rather exist in cyberspace, and be accessible via password to administrators, international judges, filmmakers, and the press from anywhere in the world that an Internet connection exists. The service bureau backs up all information,

20   which is distributed and outsourced on the Internet, so that festival offices are no longer in danger of losing records to fire or flood, or to local database crashes as may occur from time to time. According to the present embodiment, film festivals are also alleviated of the burden of cashing checks and handling credit cards from thousands of individual filmmakers,

reducing transaction costs with a single electronic funds transfer from the

service bureau, representing all fees collected on behalf of the festival.